

Back to Back by navree

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Summary:

They aren't friends, he and Steve, not really, but for a moment Jonathan wishes that they were. Just so that he'd know what to say. Just so that he'd be allowed to have something to say.

It's Halloween. Someone needs to drive Nancy home, and only one of the boys who love her can bring himself to be near her.

Back to Back

Author's Note:

I'm just gonna come out and say it, I support bi Steve, but I support bi Steve when we're shipping him with Jonathan, and not the actual human cesspool that is Billy Hargrove. So I put on some Dark Waves and did this, because I needed some sad stuff with My Boys.

as always, comments (either positive or constructive) are always welcome and much appreciated!

He stalks out of the bathroom as if it's his sole mission in life to get as far away from there as he possibly can, smashing into Jonathan's shoulder as he goes, not even slowly down when it happens. Jonathan doesn't blame him for it, because Steve looks like he needs to get away. He wonders why, of course. Because Steve had gone into the bathroom with Nancy, but had left without, and Nancy hasn't come out, and it doesn't seem like Steve would leave her. Jonathan leans forward slightly, as if about to take a step.

He stops himself at the last minute. Something pulls him back; he's not sure what. It's not as if he doesn't want to check on Nancy, if something's even wrong with her, he does. Just because they aren't really friends anymore, just because they don't really talk all that often anymore, doesn't mean that he doesn't care anymore. All that affection is still there, even though they aren't as close as they were in the week Will went missing. *Absence makes the heart grow fonder, as the poets say*, Jonathan thinks bitterly to himself.

"You OK?" The girl is pretty, underneath all the KISS makeup. And Jonathan finds that he likes talking to her. Maybe that's why he's stopped himself from going into the bathroom to see after Nancy. Maybe, subconsciously, he wants to forget her, and maybe he can do that with this girl. But no, that's not why he's hesitant.

"It was nice talking to you," Jonathan mumbles, hurried and rushed, before veering in the opposite direction, towards the door. It's completely ridiculous. He doesn't know Steve Harrington all that

well. He doesn't even like Steve Harrington all that well. Sure, he helped them defeat the Demogorgon, but that's about the only thing that comes to mind when Jonathan puts positive and Steve together in his mind. But here he is, chasing after him, checking on him, running into the new kid as he goes.

"Watch it!" he spits out. His voice is too filled with hate for someone so young. Maybe Jonathan was lucky. Because even if Steve was awful (and he wasn't really, if Jonathan thinks hard about it; beyond the camera incident, everything else was mostly Steve's awful friends), he couldn't be as awful as Billy Hargrove was shaping up to be. Steve didn't have a perpetual look of fiery loathing in his eye. Muttering an apology, Jonathan moves on his way.

He stumbles out into the yard, cold and dark, decorated with drunken teens and a Reagan/Bush sign. Jonathan allows himself a moment to breathe in the fresh air, and appreciate that he's out of the house, so hot and stuffy and thumping with music and pulsing with humanity. He looks around, trying to avoid catching the gaze of anyone doing anything unseemly on the lawn. Jonathan shoves his hands in his pockets and tosses his head around to clear his vision, digging into the soft earth with the toe of his shoes.

Eventually, he spots an unmistakable head of hair, which resides over hunched shoulder, to the far side of the house, between the wall and the bushes, almost impossible to see thanks to how far away he is and the black of his jacket. Jonathan walks toward him, quietly and cautiously, before he stops. He's close enough that he too is hidden from anyone who wouldn't actively be looking for him, shrouded in the protective custody of the night and shadows of the house, but not so close that Steve would be able to notice him unless he made himself heard. Jonathan doesn't want to, because he's stumbled upon a private scene, a scene which witnessing makes him feel as intrusive and perverse as he did that night by the pool, taking the pictures of the bedroom.

Steve is facing away from him, back rounded and slouched. His right arm is wrapped around his torso, as if simulating an embrace, and his left hand is up on his face, fingers balled on the bridge of his nose. His shoulders are shaking, rapidly, and Jonathan can hear quiet sobs. He's crying, trembling and alone in the dark, and Jonathan wonders

if he should leave and pretend this never happened. But no, he came here for a reason.

Jonathan clears his throat, and instantly Steve's hand covers his mouth, muffling any noise; Jonathan saw the quick flash of movement. "Steve?" His back straightens, but he doesn't face his new companion. It's silent, and Jonathan shuffles in the dark, unsure of how to progress.

"What do you want, Byers?" Steve's voice is toneless, the voice of a dead man. *Apt for Halloween*, Jonathan's thoughts remark snidely, and he forces them deep back into his subconscious. His hands are curled into loose half fists in his pockets, the way they often are when he's unsure of how to proceed with a conversation, or anything really. His jaw clicks as he moves it back and forth, trying to find the right words to say so that he doesn't sound like an idiot or a complete stalker.

"Nancy's pretty trashed," is what he finally settles on, and it's enough to make Steve at least move his head to the side, so that his chin is touching his shoulder, and Jonathan can see a faint profile. There's only the light from a window to illuminate them (the bathroom, maybe, in an ironic twist of fate), but in that light, Jonathan can see the faint tracks of tears. He doesn't remark on it, pretends not to notice it. It's not his place to feel sympathy, and he doubts Steve would accept it. It's not as if they're friends, or even close to it.

"Is she OK?" Steve asks, almost hesitant.

"Yeah." In contrast, Jonathan's answer is quick, a single syllable in one breath. "At least, I think she is," he amends. "She was still in the bathroom last time I left. But based on what I saw earlier, I think she's-"

"Drunk off her ass?" Now, Steve is bitter. "Yeah." He sighs, twisting slightly so that he's halfway facing Jonathan, halfway facing away. He scrubs a hand across his face, and his back spasms slightly. Jonathan really should have left him alone, but his hindsight has always been so much better than his foresight. There's a long, thick silence between them, stretching and pulling like taffy, moving and moving yet seemingly unbreakable. Steve breaks it. "Take her home."

It's worded as a command, no upward tick to give it a question's softness. But there's a pleading note to it, almost a whine.

Jonathan is an idiot of epic proportions, and chooses to ignore it.

"I think you should," he says, hemming and hawing in his own silent way, shifting back and forth on the balls of his feet. Steve shakes his head, hair flopping in front of his eyes. "She's your girlfriend," Jonathan almost chokes on the word, "And besides, I'm not even really supposed to be here in the first place. I'm sure whatever's going on, you can at least drive her back--"

"I can't!" Steven rounds on him then, looking Jonathan full in the face for the first time of their entire conversation. The sounds of the party inside are faint, and for a moment they disappear, leaving the two boys in a cocoon of silence. There's red ringing Steve's eyes, and a sort of naked pain that Jonathan has only seen for the first time, this night, in him. His eyes have always been expressive, dark and round, easy to find emotion in, and tonight is no exception. In Steve's eyes is a look that says he cannot bear to be near Nancy, cannot bear to look at her, to touch her, to take her home. Jonathan meets it, feeling a constriction in his chest.

"OK." Just as quickly as he faced him, Steve turns away again, furtively, as if ashamed. Ashamed of what? His outburst? His tears? Jonathan wants to say something about it, but finds himself mute. For once, he's angered by it. They aren't friends, he and Steve, not really, but for a moment Jonathan wishes that they were. Just so that he'd know what to say. Just so that he'd be allowed to have something to say. What would he say, even? That there's no need to be ashamed, no need to be shamed by his tears, by his emotions?

Something tells Jonathan that Steve may not accept that if he says it.

"Just..." A deep breath. "Just take her home Byers. Please." Not a command but not a plea, a beg, and this time Jonathan doesn't push it, just hums his assent and turns to leave. He pauses again, and for a moment it's just the two of them, in the dark, standing back to back, close but not too close, not friends but not enemies like this time last year. He hears a hiccup from Steve, and realizes that, for all the bravado he sees at school, bravado that would make him seem tough

and unfeeling, he is only barely holding it together, stifling his emotions for the sake of vanity. Jonathan leaves swiftly, back towards the house, and lets him have his moment of weakness alone.

Back at the party, he runs into the girl from before, the KISS girl, watching Billy Hargrove dance as if he's on speed with a disapproving expression. Jonathan catches her elbow, and she gives him a surprised look. Surprised but friendly. Perhaps, if things had gone differently tonight, they might have gotten to know each other better.

"Can you do me a favor?" he asks. She nods, rolling her shoulders back. Jonathan hears her spine crackle and pop. It seems an apt, macabre soundtrack for the night. "Steve Harrington is outside. Could you give him a ride home or something? I think he's a bit drunk." The KISS girl raises an eyebrow.

"I didn't realize you two were friends."

"We're not," Jonathan responds immediately, but it sounds awkward and clunky on his tongue. Like a lie, except he's not lying, but he's not exactly telling the truth either. Something in between. The girl holds up her hand, a silent Say no more, and pats his arm before moving outside. Jonathan hopes it takes her time to find Steve, so that he can have a private moment without someone else intruding on it.

Squaring his shoulders, he goes towards the bathroom, the memory of he and Steve at the side of the house burned into his mind.